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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0519  
INFO RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 0003  
RUEHDH/AMCONSUL DHAHRAN PRIORITY 0041  
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0109

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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/E  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [SA](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: SUDANESE PRESIDENT VISITS SAUDI ARABIA

REF: RIYADH 442

Classified By: DCM David Rundell for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) KEY POINTS:

-- Saudi and Sudanese media reports indicate that Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir traveled to Saudi Arabia April 1 to perform Umrah at Mecca's Holy Mosque en route from the Arab League summit in Qatar.

-- The Saudi government did not announce the trip in advance, but the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) confirmed the visit after Bashir's arrival. The SPA statement confirmed that "a number of senior officials" received Bashir at the Holy Mosque.

-- There was no immediate word on the expected duration of Bashir's stay in the kingdom.

[1](#)2. (C) COMMENT:

-- This is not the first time an 'outlaw' has visited Mecca. The Saudis say their duty as custodians of the Islamic holy sites obliges them to allow any Muslim to travel there for religious purposes, even if the individual might otherwise be unwelcome in the Kingdom.

-- Even so, Bashir's visit likely could not have taken place without King Abdullah's consent. This could have been given when the King spoke by phone to Bashir on March 18, during Sudanese Vice President Ali Uthman Mohamed Taha's visit to Riyadh March 22, or at the summit in Doha.  
FRAKER